

3 August 2010

NZ Transport Agency- Auckland Region

NZTA's Father's Day advice: avoid Southern Motorway

The NZ Transport Agency [NZTA] is advising people to avoid Auckland's Southern Motorway on Father's Day weekend [4 and 5 September] when it plans a maximum 36 hour closure of a section of the highway for necessary work to open the first stage of the new Newmarket Viaduct.

The motorway's southbound lanes will be closed between the Gillies Ave off-ramp and Greenlane interchange from 5pm Saturday, 4 September, for final preparations to allow drivers on to the southbound lanes of the new viaduct from Monday morning, 6 September.

The NZTA's State Highways Manager for Auckland, Tommy Parker, says closing a section of the southbound lanes has the potential to cause extensive congestion throughout Auckland and he advises people to stay away from the Southern Motorway that weekend.

"Travel delays will be inevitable, and they will be considerable and widespread" he says.

Detours are planned, but Mr Parker says the alternative routes will not be able to cope if regular weekend traffic flows occur.

"We're talking about trying to re-direct up to 80,000 vehicles on the Sunday alone," he adds. "Even with detours, the impact of the closure will be felt well beyond the Southern Motorway and people need to allow a lot more time for their journey if they do have to travel. "

Detour routes to key destinations, such as Auckland International Airport, are available online, at www.nzta.govt.nz/newmarketconnection and www.facebook.com/switchmyroute.

Mr Parker says construction of the new viaduct is ahead of schedule and the NZTA and its Newmarket Connection partners want to deliver the benefits from the project to drivers as quickly as possible.

"To have reached the stage where we're now ready to switch southbound traffic across to the new structure, significantly ahead of schedule, without having previously closed the motorway to daytime traffic, is a remarkable achievement," Mr Parker says. "We are now asking people to recognise these efforts in keeping the city moving, and support us through the closure."

The Automobile Association is also urging people to avoid unnecessary trips. If they do have to travel says AA spokesman Simon Lambourne, they should plan their journeys and drive with patience and care.

“Congestion will be significant with the closure of the southbound lanes,” Mr Lambourne says, “but the short term pain will be well worth it given the long term benefits of the new viaduct.”

Over the next month, The NZTA will run an extensive communications campaign using traditional and social media to make people aware of the closure and its impact on travel.

During the closure, the viaduct’s new lanes will be connected to the motorway and the blue lifting gantry shifted on to the existing southbound lanes for stage 2 of the Newmarket Connection: Viaduct Replacement Project. When traffic is switched, work can also start to complete a fourth southbound lane across the viaduct to Greenlane, due to open early 2011.

The weekend before it opens to traffic, people will have the chance to walk over the new viaduct. The community event is planned for Sunday August 29, from 9am to midday. More information is available online at www.nzta.govt.nz/newmarketconnection and www.facebook.com/switchmyroute.

The closure is the second involving projects that will improve journey travel times through Auckland’s Central Motorway Junction – the country’s most congested section of highway. The Victoria Park Tunnel project is closing the north bound Wellington Street on-ramp for three months from 22 August. Mr Parker says neither closure will impact on the other.
ENDS

Note to editors: In the event of adverse weather the weekend of September 4–5, these works could be delayed until the next available weekend.

For more information on the Newmarket Connection: Viaduct Replacement Project visit, www.nzta.govt.nz/newmarketconnection

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